

NEW REPORT SHOWS INDIAN GOVERNMENT IS TO BLAME FOR MASSACRE OF 35 SIKHS IN CHATTI SINGHPORA

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OF NEW YORK

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Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, recently two human-rights groups in Punjab, the Punjab Human Rights Organization and the Movement Against State Repression, published a report on the massacre of 35 Sikhs in the village of Chatti Singhpora, Kashmir, this past March. Despite the Indian government's efforts to blame Pakistan and alleged Kashmiri "militants" for the massacre, an effort the Indian government reinforced by killing five innocent Kashmiris, the report clearly and unambiguously places the blame where it belongs—on the Indian government.

"It is our considered opinion," the report says, "that Pakistan has nothing to gain by ordering militants/mercenaries to massacre Sikhs in the Kashmir valley. Pakistan had steered clear of this kind of act during 10–15 years of militancy in J&K," the group wrote. "J&K militants too had nothing to gain from such an incident. Indian leaders however gained substantial mileage from this incident as a spate of international sympathy was forthcoming," the investigative team wrote. They noted that India's Home Minister, L.K. Advani, "was quoted as saying that three events brought a turn around in international opinion in India's favor. He mentioned Kargil, the hijacking of the Indian airliner, and the Chatti Singhpora incident."

According to the report, the people in the village of Chatti Singhpora "did not believe that militants had any hand in this incident." The report notes that "as a rule foreign mercenaries visit a village once and do not come back again. So these men cannot be militants. Also real militants do not part with their weapons even for a minute." The killers wore military uniforms and chanted "Jai Mata Di; Jai Hind," a Hindu nationalist slogan. The report notes that the Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims have very good relations. Both the Chief Minister of Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, and Mr. Advani had warned villagers against supporting "militants."

The authors of the report conclude that the Indian government's counterinsurgency forces, which are run by the Indian intelligence service, RAW, are responsible for the massacre of Chatti Singhpora.

Unfortunately, the Indian government is suppressing this information, and their friends in the democratic countries of the world are protecting them. There must be a full, fair, independent, and complete investigation and the people responsible for this terrible atrocity must be prosecuted. However, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan admitted that "security forces would not be punished for the killings of civilians. It would demoralize the troops who are fighting insurgency in different states." This is a very revealing statement by an official of the Indian government. Perhaps this is why an allegedly democratic country needs a "Movement Against State Repression."

America is the beacon of freedom. America must not allow an allegedly democratic coun-

try to continue these activities. We must do what we can to help bring freedom to the people of South Asia. It is time to stop our aid to India until it lets the people within its borders enjoy the human rights to which all people are entitled. We should stop supporting India's anti-Americanism. And we should declare our support for an internationally-supervised, free and fair plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan on the question of independence. We should also support similar plebiscites in Kashmir, in Christian Nagaland, and throughout India. This is the way to bring real freedom, peace, prosperity, and stability to South Asia. It will also gain us new allies in that troubled region.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could put this excellent report into the RECORD, but it is too long. I would like to place the summary sections of observations and recommendations into the RECORD, for the information of my colleagues. I urge my colleagues, especially those who are supporters of India, to read these sections carefully.

### VISIT TO CHITHI SINGHPORA OBSERVATIONS

#### 3.1. Team Observations

The facts narrated above clearly indicate that the visitors of Chithi Singhpora were not members of the security forces. Dress, language, careless handling of weapons and behaviour in general discounts the security forces. That they were militants, can also be safely ruled out because it is general knowledge that militants guard their weapons most carefully and would not visit a location repeatedly knowing that an RR post is located 3–4 kms away. The finger therefore points towards the so-called Counter Insurgents/Renegades (Surrendered militants). The description of the villagers, in fact, corroborates this assessment.

The fact that the RR Unit was located close to Chithi Singhpora and the statement of Principal Ranji Singh and teacher Niranjani Singh clearly indicated that the security forces know fully well about the identity of the visitors to Chithi Singhpora and did nothing about it.

The statements of various individuals in Anantnag/Srinagar tallies with what the villagers narrated to the team. One man Karamjit Singh spoke a different language. He stressed in his statement that the killers were militants. Secondly his various actions indicate that he has an inkling that some force had come to kill on March 20, 2000 evening. His escape was miraculous in spite of his being addressed directly by the so called CO not to go home. He still escaped. In our opinion Karamjit appears to have been in some contact with the security forces. His migration to Jammu and his nervousness during the teams meeting with him clearly point to this.

The State Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah had asked for a Judicial enquiry into the Chithi Singhpora killings by a Supreme Court Judge. (Press Statement is attached as Annexure II). Instead, the Centre has ordered a judicial enquiry by Justice Pandhian into the Pathribal killings of five civilians and police firing at Brakpora. The Chithi Singhpora killings are to be probed by the Additional Judicial Magistrate only. This clearly indicates that the truth behind this Chithi Singhpora incident is not being allowed to surface.

All efforts should be made to normalise the situation and bring the Sikhs back into the mainstream in the State.

The team feels that Law and Order being a state subject, the handling and allotment of tasks to the Counter-Insurgency Force was done by the state authorities under the aegis

of the Director General of Police. Events as they unfolded clearly indicate that this force was misutilised for criminal acts outside the parameters of law. Here we have support from the publication Amnesty International (Embargoed for February 22, 1999). An extract from the same (Page 26, Column 2) is reproduced here.

... Only three months earlier, Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah was quoted as saying that the Jammu and Kashmir state police and the Punjab police had achieved excellence in fighting terrorism and they could be trusted in the proxy war-like situation facing the state. The reference to Punjab police was no chance remark as the Director General of Police appointed in February 1997 has served for many years in counter-insurgency operations in Punjab where high levels of human rights violations had been reported. The Jammu and Kashmir state police have shown a disturbing disregard for the rule of law in their expanding counter-insurgency operations, leading to increasing allegations of arbitrary arrests, torture, killings and 'disappearance' perpetrated by police officers themselves and reports of their connivance in abuses committed by other agencies such as the renegades. It is also shown in the way police have obstructed victims' and victims' families' access to redress."

We feel that a Central Agency directed this operation without the knowledge of the State Chief Minister and his Cabinet. This, therefore, is an act that needs to be condemned and a high level probe ordered to punish the guilty.

The Sikh soldiers have been used disproportionately in Nagaland, Assam, Sri Lanka and all along in Kashmir. This tends to endanger the amity existing between the minority and local majority community. This has special reference to the good relations existing between the majority Kashmiri Muslims and the minority Kashmiri Sikhs in J&K.

It is our considered opinion that Pakistan had nothing to gain by ordering militants/mercenaries to massacre Sikhs in the Kashmir valley. Pakistan had stressed clear of this kind of act during the past 10–15 years of military in J&K.

J&K militants too had nothing to gain from such an incident.

Indian leaders however gained substantial mileage from the incident as a spate of international sympathy was forthcoming. In fact President Clinton was joined by a number of others in decrying terrorism and killing of civilians in Kashmir. Union Home Minister Advani in one of his speeches was quoted as saying that three events brought a turn around in international opinion in India's favour. He mentioned Kargil, the hijacking of the Indian plane and Chithi Singhpora incident.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1. Team Recommendations

The Chithi Singhpora killings resulted in a major tragedy for the Sikh community in J&K. It was a traumatic event which had national and international ramifications. The killers have yet to be identified by the state and national authorities. It is therefore, very vital to discount various rumours and conjectures making the rounds. The team recommends that:

i. The Chithi Singhpora killings be investigated by the United Nations Human Rights Commission as these killings are symptomatic of killings that have taken place in various parts of India during counter-insurgency operations. Once the culprits are identified they should be dealt with speedily in accordance with the law.

ii. Compensation to be given to the victims of the killings at Chithi Singhpora.

Pathribal, Brakpora and other related incidents should be Rupees 10 Lakhs as recommended to be given to victims of custodial killings by the Indian NHRC along with allied benefits.

iii. In spite of assistance by the majority Kashmiri Muslims and security measures taken by the centre and state government, some Sikh families still feel insecure and desire to migrate. In case they do so they should be provided with adequate facilities

at least equal to that provided to the migrating Kashmiri Pandits and their families.

iv. The Chithi Singhpora killings put a question mark on the employment of surrendered militants as a viable counter-insurgency force. This force consists of individuals who have changed loyalties for material benefits. Their misuse of arms and exploitation of the situation for personal gain has been highlighted by the media repeatedly. We strongly recommend that this force be

disbanded forthwith. Surrendered militants should be absorbed into mainstream of civil life rather than be employed in the counter-insurgency role.

Dated: April 29, 2000.

Signed,

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INDERJIT SINGH JAIJEE,

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